DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 684 CG 016 108

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TITLE Attitudinal Differences of Black Female Secondary Students Which May Influence Their Graduating from High School.
PUB DATE 10 Oct 81
NOTE 23p.; Best copy available. Paper presented at the National Black Child Development Institute (Washington, DC, October 10, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; *Black Students; Comparative Analysis; *Females; *High Risk Students; *Potential Dropouts; Secondary Education; Secondary School Students; *Student Attitudes; Student Teacher Relationship

ABSTRACT

Literature reveals that students most apt to be potential dropouts are those referred to as a "high risk population." Black females depict the assumed poorest risk among an already high risk group. A study of black female secondary school students regarded as potential dropouts attempted to determine if persisters' and non-persisters' attitudes toward school, school work, teachers, and peers had an influence. Responses of persisters indicated that teachers did not expect enough work from students. Non-persisters felt that teachers did not spend enough time with students. Persisters had a generally more positive attitude toward school work, but data indicated that student attitudes were not strong determining factors in academic persistence. The results suggest that a positive attitude toward school work and school in general are factors that aid black females in completing high school. (Author/JAC)

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ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES OF BLACK FEMALE SECONDARY STUDENTS WHICH MAY INFLUENCE THEIR GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

PAPER PRESENTED AT NATIONAL
BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
WASHINGTON, D. C. OCTOBER 10, 1981

CG 016108

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LITERATURE REVIEW

I -- Attitude Theory

It has been suggested by numerous studies that one's attitude affects social actions and/or aspirations. One's attitude can stimulate positive and negative behavior toward or against some environmental factor which, according to Borgadus (1931) and Thurstone (1931), creates a positive or negative value.

Hypotheses have been put forth that students' attitudes play a major role in their ability to persist in school. If students possess a positive attitude toward education, is it fair to assume that they will value education and persist? Fishbein (1967) declares that more recent attitude research has indicated little evidence to substantiate that knowledge of an individual's attitude toward some object will allow one to predict the ways he will behave with respect to the object.

The word "attitude" is an abstract term in the English language and, consequently, has more than one meaning. In view of the vast amount of research on attitude, an indepth review of the literature is not critical to this study. However, the researcher felt that some understanding of attitude theory is necessary so the reader will be provided with a perspective and understanding of attitude theory as it relates to this particular study.

As early as 1918, social psychology was defined as the scientific study of attitudes (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918). The word "attitude" is derived from the Latin aptus, it has on the one hand the significance of "fitness" or "adaptedness," and like its byform aptitude connotes a subjective or mental state or preparation for for action (Allport, 1935).

Because mentalistic psychology preceded response psychology, it is found that mental attitudes are acknowledged before motor attitudes. Allport (1935) quotes Spencer, one of the foremost psychologists, to employ the term, motor attitudes, in his book First Principles (1862). He wrote:

> When arriving at correct judgments on disputed questions much depends on the attitude of mind we preserve while listening to, or taking part, in the controversy: and for the preservation of a right attitude it is needful that we should learn how true, and yet how untrue, are average beliefs.

Following a critical analysis of more than 100 various definitions of attitude Allport (1935) succinctly posited that the historical development of the concept of attitude for contemporary psychologists, " . . . connotes a neuropsychic state of readiness for mental and physical activity."

In 1935, Allport concluded that the concept of attitude is the most distinctive and essential concept in the entire area of social psychology. Allport characterizes attitudes as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 8). Allport's definition of attitudes included the "task-attitude" which was discovered to play a major role in investigations of perceptions, judgment, and thought.

Leonard Doob (1947) contributed the second major milestone in attitude theory when he argued that there is more than a one-to-one relationship between attitude and behavior. Fundamentally, Doob's logic, as critiqued by Fishbein (1967), was the following:

> Attitude is a learned predisposition to respond; that is, it is a learned mediating response. Thus one has to learn the attitude--the appropriate predisposition toward any given object. But once one has learned the attitude, he also must learn what response to make to it--that is, there is no innate relationship between the attitude and behavior; one still has to learn a behavioral response. Two people may learn to hold the same attitude toward a given stimulus; clearly, however, they may also learn to make different responses given the same learned attitude. (p. 478)

Krech and Crutchfield (1948) view attitude as ". . . an enduring organization or motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive process with respect to some aspect of the individual's world."

Katz and Stotland (1957) felt that attitude relects an idea or belief and in addition reflects the feeling or effect of the idea or belief.

Halloran (1967), agreeing with Allport, states that attitudes are not inherent. Rather, they are acquired, extended, and organized based on experiences. Further, attitudes have motivational qualities that can lead persons to search for or elude situations.

Johnson (1970) defines attitude as a state of readiness to react either positively or negatively. He, too, supports the theory of Halloran and Allport, in that the development of attitudes is experience-oriented and attitude change is clearly relatable to experience.

Hartley (1968) also supports the hypothesis of Halloran and Allport, agreeing that attitude is learned and has motivational, cognitive, effective, and expressive facets. He also concurs with Doob that attitude is more than a one-to-one relationship with behavior; that is, one's attitude is multifaceted and becomes ". . . integrated with the personality of the individuals."

Sherif and Sherif (1963) operationalize the term "attitude" by defining it as

> . . . the individual's set of categories for evaluating a stimulus domain, which he has established as he learns about that domain in interaction with other persons and which relate him to various subsets within the domain with varying degrees of positive or negative effect. (p. 115)

When we postulate about one's perspectives, convictions, sentiments, and beliefs we are generating beliefs about that individual's attitudes. The attitudes of an individual reveals what s/he is and what s/he is not, according to his/her self-image (Sherif, 1968). Therefore it appears that different attitudes toward education would have a great influence on how long students aspire to stay in school (Tillery & Kildegaard, 1973), and to what extent they will search out supportive factors to maintain their educational aspirations. However, it is well known that different students may hold the same attitude, yet respond differently toward a given stimulus.

II -- Student Attitudes

Students' attitudes toward school work and school in general are influenced by their teachers, peers, family, and a host of other institutions and environmental factors. These attitudes have emotional accompaniments ranging from very strong agreement to very strong disagreement.

It is understandable that attitudes differ because no two students have exactly the same experiences. Certain circumstances predispose certain attitudes towards school; however, some of the variables contributing to variations in attitude are similar. Some students enjoy school; others do not. For most Black students, school, like the rest of life, is a "mixed bag" ranging from joy to fear, anger, and disgust, high expectations, anxieties, and doubts. Cain and Weisman's study (1972) which involved a survey of northern Blacks, supports the fact that each individual, Black or White, occupy variant psychological and social orientation.

Research traditionally has implied that social class identification related to low socioeconomic status nurtures negative attitude toward education, although Coleman's (1966) research has indicated high educational aspirations on the part of Black students and their parents. Discrepancies do exist between what students profess as attitudes and their resulting behavior. Studies by Festinger (1957) support the belief that attitude is often inconsistent with the "action" one takes.

Schools can be the most significant and meaningful force in the lives of the poor. Schools exercise, by compulsory attendance laws, more control than any other cultural force in shaping and preparing individuals for adult life. To a great extent, school experiences determine the attitudes and concepts which make us what we are. The Coleman Report (1966) made it explicit that attitudes of positive self-image are crucial to students' experiences of success in school. Mayeske's (1975) study concluded "that influences on student achievement tended, when analyzed, to resolve themselves into attitudinal and motivational factors . . . and that attitudinal and motivational factors were by far the more important."

Shaw, Edson and Bell (1960), stressed the need to study and understand the underachiever in attempting to heighten understanding of the interrelationship between factors of motivation and intelligence. In their study of 20 male and 21 female achievers, and 19 males and 27 female underachievers the authors found that:

1. Differences in attitude do exist between achievers and nonachievers.

2. Male underachievers seem to have more negative feelings about themselves than do male achievers.

3. Female underachievers tend to be ambivalent with regard to their feelings toward themselves.

4. The present data do not indicate whether differences in self-concept are the causes or the results of underachievement.

Edwards (1978) and Mackler (1970) concur that research relating to Black academic achievement has been, by and large, ignored. They further urge researchers to study attitudes of Black students who successfully triumph over the hostile social environment to achieve by overcoming tremendous odds.

Unfortunately, institutional racism prevails in all aspects of Black life -- education, housing, employment, and social activities (Marshall, 1971), thus making the attainment of academic success even more elusive to minorities. However, Edwards' study on Black high school students who were experiencing academic success increase our optimism for the future. He projects that ". . . attitudes toward academic success and attitudes toward other aspects of life will coalesce, forming a minimally contradictory system."

The complex interaction of the many individuals who team to deliver the educational goals of society, coupled with the interfacing with those who are recipients of the educational goals are permeated by the attitudes of all involved. Many variables, including the above, contribute to the formation of attitudes. In the formative years there are those who consciously and/or subconsciously contribute to the individual's self-concept and personality formation through social experiences (Campbell, 1967).

In summary, other literature reveals that the population who are most apt to be potential dropouts are those students who are often referred to as "high risk population." In other words, potential dropouts are students with high truancy rates, poor school attendance or behavior, and significant academic and achievement deficits in comparison to their peers; they are members of an ethnic minority group of a lower socioeconomic level and members of families who do not have the wherewithal to provide the resources for their children, which are important for academic success.

The research in the area of attitude theory reveals that aptitude, the byform of attitude, connotes a mental state of learned readiness for a given stimuli. Increasingly, research interest is declining in those areas of study which imply that socioeconomic status is synonymous with negative attitudes toward school.

A high-risk population, with respect to staying in school, was deliberately chosen for this study. Therefore, all subjects interviewed had to meet the established criteria, which according to the literature review, predisposed the population to failure. The choice of Black females compounded the potential for failure, inasmuch as they depict the assumed poorest risks among an already high-risk group.

Traditionally, women have been devalued by society. Similarly, being Black has been devalued by the majority of society. How then do poor Black females, whose status dictates unequal and inadequate resources, sustain themselves and acquire attitudes which enable them to persist in their schooling?

Today's society demands the high school diploma for employment consideration. The economic plight and high incidence of poverty among Black women, who disproportionately head households, will not be changed if research on Black women is not undertaken. Weinberg (1970), among others, apologizes for the absence of research pertaining to Black women, especially poor Black women. The need for research of this population is apparent, not so much to determine where we are, but rather directions to be taken for the future.

Appendix A, by means of case studies, illustrates the influences that may be present in the lives of persisters and nonpersisters. Appendix B illustrates how three young mothers coped with their situations in order to pursue their secondary diplomas.

This study has attempted to determine if attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters, toward school, school work, teachers, and peers influence persistence.

METHOD

The Data for the study was gathered in an urban city in Upstate New York. A review of the literature established criteria to identify "potential dropouts". That is, any student who had:

a) a high rate of illegal absences
b) been suspended/separated from school by a school administrator
c) discipline problems
d) dropped out formally/informally for any reason other than pregnancy

A computer printout identifying students with high rates of absenteeism was secured from the Board of Education Research Office. All high schools were contacted and the researcher (as prearranged) requested school administrators, counselors, and social workers to identify students who met "potential dropout" criteria. Individual interviews were scheduled with "potential dropouts" and consisted of:

1. The Student Analysis System Form for Identifying Potential Dropouts: utilized to collect the demographic data for the study. Table 1 is a profile of data on demographic and other personal factors of the persisters as compared and contrasted with a profile on nonpersisters. Statistical analysis was accomplished utilizing Chi-square probability.
2. The Pupil Opinion Questionnaire (POQF): assessed attitudes of students toward peers, school work, school in general and teachers. Participants were asked to rate their responses to each of the 30 questions on a 4-point Likert-type scale. A number 4 indicated "I agree very much"; a number 3 "I agree a little", a number 2, "I disagree a little", and the number 1 indicated "I disagree very much". The assigning of the numbers was reversed when the question was stated in the affirmative. Mean scores were calculated, and tabulated for comparison between the persisters and nonpersisters' responses. The lower the mean score, the more indicative the score is of a positive response to the "attitude" statement. The differences between groups were assessed using the t-test at the .05 significance level.

Table 1
Profile of Data on Demographic and Other Personal[a] Factors of Persisters and Nonpersisters
(N = 66)

Factor	Category		Percentage n: Persisters n = 33	Percentage n: Nonpersisters n = 33	Chi-square and probability
A	Subject's age:	16	6.1	30.3	x^2=8.1698
		17	39.4	33.3	p =0.0426*
		18	39.4	18.2	
		19	15.2	18.2	
B	Number of siblings at home:	1	3.0	15.2	x^2=7.0968
		2	15.2	9.1	p =0.5262
		3	12.1	12.1	
		4	12.1	15.2	
		5	12.1	18.2	
		6	21.2	9.1	
		7	6.1	9.1	
		8	15.2	6.1	
		9	3.0	6.1	
C	Position among siblings in family:				
	First ordered		45.5	33.3	x^2=3.1753
	Second ordered		27.3	18.2	p =0.2044
	Third ordered or higher		27.3	48.5	
D	Closest friend(s) attending same school:				
	No		42.4	45.5	x^2=0.0000
	Yes		57.6	54.5	p =1.0000
E	Participate in extracurricular activities:				
	No		45.5	36.4	x^2=0.2507
	Yes		54.5	63.6	p =0.6166
F	Participate in activities outside of school:				
	No		63.6	33.3	x^2=4.9136
	Yes		36.4	65.7	p =0.0266*
G	Head of household employed:				
	No		45.5	36.4	x^2=0.2507
	Yes		54.5	63.6	p =0.6166
H	Mother's education:				
	Eighth grade or less		36.4	45.5	x^2=1.0256
	Some High school		45.5	33.3	p =0.5988
	High school graduate		18.2	21.2	
I	Living with:				
	Both parents		36.4	27.3	x^2=1.4285
	One parent and parent(s) friend		3.0	6.1	p =0.6989
	Mother or Father		54.5	54.5	
	Other		6.1	12.1	
J	Subject has children:				
	No		69.7	66.7	x^2=0.0000
	Yes		30.3	33.3	p =1.0000
K	Subject involved in church:				
	No		36.4	72.7	x^2=7.3940
	Yes		63.6	27.3	p =0.0065*
L	Subject is employed:				
	No		57.6	90.9	x^2=7.9230
	Yes		42.4	9.1	p =0.0049**

[a] N = total sample size; n = sum of each subsample. Percentages are based upon n or subsample.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

FINDINGS

Attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters as they relate to teachers, peers, school work and school in general, are summarized in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5. The data was collected with the Pupil Opinion Questionnaire Form.

Significant differences were found between age distribution ($p < .05$). Seventy-nine percent of the persisters as compared to 52 percent of the nonpersisters, were in the age range 17-18 years. Analysis of data revealed:

a) nonpersisters were more likely to be engaged in recreational activities outside of school ($p < .05$)
b) persisters were more likely to participate in church activities ($p < .01$)
c) persisters were more likely to be employed while attending school ($p < .01$)

I -- Attitudes of Students Toward Teachers

Only one factor demonstrated statistical significance ($p < .05$) in students' attitudes toward teachers (Table 2). This was Factor--I which indicated that nonpersisters perceived teachers as not having time to spend with students. Examination of the mean scores of both groups indicates that persisters generally have slightly less positive attitudes towards teachers than nonpersisters. Keeping in mind that a higher mean score indicates a negative attitude, all factors except Factors E, G, and J, indicate a higher mean score and, therefore, a more negative attitude on the part of persisters towards teachers than nonpersisters.

II -- Attitude of Students Toward Peers

There were no statistically significant differences between the attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters toward peers (Table 3). The mean scores of both groups tended to reveal ambivalent attitudes toward peers. This is shown by persisters' tendency to agree that pupils' fear of teachers is common (Factor A), and disagree that school is a place to make new friends (Factor B). Similarly, nonpersisters disagree that the same few pupils are important in most school groups (Factor C) and agree that some pupils do not treat other pupils fairly (Factor D).

Table 2

Attitudes of Students Towards Teachers (N = 66)

Factor	Item Number on POQF[a]	Attitude Items	Persisters Mean n=33	Nonpersisters Mean n=33	t-value Probability
A	(6)	Teachers are concerned with the well-being of their pupils.	2.09	2.03	t = - .250 p = .800
B	(7)	Teachers find fault with some pupils without reason.	2.76	2.73	t = - .120 p = .901
C	(10)	Teachers are found to be trustworthy by most of their pupils.	2.27	2.12	t = - .670 p = .506
D	(11)	A pupil can seldom satisfy the teacher.	2.67	2.45	t = - .830 p = .411
E	(15)	Teachers always have some favorite pupils.	3.58	3.70	t = .790 p = .434
F	(19)	Not many teachers are grouchy.	2.45	2.33	t = - .500 p = .617
G	(21)	Most teachers are hard to get along with.	2.27	2.64	t = 1.390 p = .169
H	(24)	Teachers often make mistakes.	3.27	3.24	t = - .160 p = .875
I	(25)	Teachers usually have some time to spend with students.	2.15	1.73	t = -2.160 p = .035*
J	(27)	Most teachers demand that students learn certain things.	1.72	1.82	t = .370 p = .716

Table 3

Attitudes of Students Toward Peers (N = 66)

Factor	Item Number on POQF[a]	Attitude Items	Persisters Mean n=33	Nonpersisters Mean n=33	t-value Probability
A	(1)	Pupils' fear of teachers is common.	2.0606	1.9091	t = ..640 p = .522
B	(3)	School is a place to make new friends.	1.8788	1.6970	t = .750 p = .458
C	(9)	The same few pupils are important in most school groups.	2.0909	2.1818	t = -.340 p = .732
D	(13)	Some pupils do not treat other pupils fairly.	3.4242	3.6667	t =-1.220 p = .226

[a] Pupil Opinion Questionnaire Form.

* $p < .05$

III--Attitudes of Students Towards School Work

An examination of the data regarding students' attitudes toward school work revealed no statistically significant differences between attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters in eight of the nine factors in Table 4. The data also indicated that persisters felt that teachers do not expect enough work from students. This factor was statistically significant at the .05 level. Both persisters and nonpersisters had identical mean scores on Factor C (Grades mean too much to people). Persisters have a slightly more positive attitude towards school work than do nonpersisters; since with the exception of Factor B (School never seems to change), Factor G (Teachers require more reading than is necessary), and Factor I (Pupils should not be required to do more work than they want to do)-- the mean scores of persisters on all factors are lower, which suggest a more positive attitude toward school work.

IV--Attitude of Students Towards School in General

Attitudes toward school in general show no statistically significant differences between the two groups (Table #5). However, persisters' mean scores tended to exhibit more favorable attitudes toward school than nonpersisters. Persisters have lower mean scores in six out of seven factors indicating that generally, persisters have slightly more positive attitudes toward school. If it is assumed that a positive attitude, as indicated in the literature search, is an important variable, it follows that a positive attitude toward school work, and school in general, supports school persistence.

DISCUSSION

In summary, no statistically significant differences were found between attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters towards their peers, or towards school in general, as shown in Tables 3 and 5 respectively.

Regarding the attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters toward teachers and school work, Tables 2 and 4, statistically significant difference occurred in only one factor in each table; both factors were teacher-related. The mean scores of persisters indicated a tendency for persisters to have a more positive attitude toward school work and school in general than did nonpersisters. On the other hand, mean scores of non-

Table 4

Attitudes of Students Towards School Work (N = 66)

Factor	Item Number on POQF[a]	Attitude Items	Persisters Mean n=33	Nonpersisters Mean n=33	t-value Probability
A	(2)	Much of what we study in school appears worthless.	2.2121	2.3330	t = - .470 p = .641
B	(4)	School never seems to change. We study the same old things day after day.	2.5667	2.4242	t = .860 p = .392
C	(14)	Grades mean too much to people.	2.9697	2.9697	t = .000 p = 1.000
D	(17)	I dislike most of the things I study in school.	2.1818	2.2121	t = - .110 p = .913
E	(18)	It is right to keep pupils after school to finish their work.	2.7879	2.9394	t = - .560 p = .578
F	(22)	Generally, teachers do not expect enough work from students.	2.5758	3.0606	t = -2.000 p = .050*
G	(26)	Teachers require more reading than is necessary.	2.5152	2.4848	t = .110 p = .911
H	(28)	Pupils are expected to learn about things that do not interest them.	2.9697	3.1515	t = - .730 p = .467
I	(29)	Pupils should not be required to do more work than they want to do.	2.0909	1.6061	t = 1.820 p = .073

Table 5

Attitudes of Students Towards School in General (N = 66)

Factor	Item Number on POQF[a]	Attitude Items	Persisters Mean n=33	Nonpersisters Mean n=33	t-value Probability
A	(5)	School is never very exciting.	2.2424	2.3030	t = - .230 p = .818
B	(6)	Most pupils receive fair treatment in schools.	2.1212	2.1212	t = .000 p = 1.000
C	(12)	Sometimes school is not very interesting.	2.8485	3.1818	t = -1.650 p = .104
D	(16)	School is not really that bad.	1.6667	1.6970	t = - .170 p = .863
E	(20)	We seem to be doing new things in school.	2.4242	2.6061	t = - .680 p = .500
F	(23)	Going to school is hard, but not discouraging.	2.1212	2.2727	t = - .570 p = .569
G	(30)	Schools have too many rules.	2.7273	2.8485	t = - .430 p = .667

[a] Pupil Opinion Questionnaire Form.

* $p < .05$

persisters suggest a more positive attitude towards teachers than persisters. Mean scores did not exhibit a trend with respect to attitudes toward peers by either group.

In analyzing the attitudes of persisters and nonpersisters towards teachers, peers, school work, and school in general, the researcher assumed that the responses of both groups to the Pupil Opinion Questionnaire Form reflect the true attitudes or beliefs of the respondents. This concurs with Baron and Byrne (1977) and Gazda (1974). The researcher had shared with each individual respondent the importance of the study, the need to be completely honest, and guaranteed anonymity.

Nonpersisters perceived teachers as "usually having some time to spend with students". It follows then that this positive stance would significantly contribute to persistence. Such does not appear to be the case in and of itself. Although teachers are regarded favorably with respect to this factor, this attitude may be necessary but, apparently, is not sufficient to prevent dropping out of school. This interpretation is supported by trends inferred from the mean scores of persisters which indicated a more negative attitude towards teachers than nonpersisters, yet the persisters did not drop out of school. It is interesting that although teachers were perceived favorably, the extent of learning which transpired with nonpersisters is questionable. Statistically, persisters indicated that teachers did not expect enough work from students. One concludes that the view of youth towards teachers with respect to the availability of attention does not exclusively result in persistence. This finding is generally consistent with the hypotheses of Johnson (1970), who stated that: "teacher's expectations toward the child will not always affect the self-attitudes of the child" (p. 95).

It is common knowledge that peer groups can influence one's behavior in a positive or negative manner. The data herein infer that peers were not influential in either encouraging or discouraging persistence to a significant extent.

According to analysis of mean scores, persisters tend to have a more positive attitude than do nonpersisters towards school work and school in general. This may be a contributing factor towards their relative academic success.

Most of the data exhibited trends consistent with the literature regarding attitudes; that is, in general, a positive attitude increases the chances of success. Therefore, a positive attitude towards school work and school in general are factors which aid persistence of Black females to secure the high school diploma.

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APPENDIX A

Case I — A Persister's Journey Toward A High School Diploma

Lacy is now 17 years old. Her family is comprised of five siblings, mother and step-father, who all reside at the same address. Lacy is the only child from her mother's first marriage.

In 1972, Lacy's mother married for a second time. At the time of the marriage Lacy was an only child and was in the eighth grade.

Lacy recalls that when she first started thinking about dropping out of school, she was in the ninth grade. Her mother had had a second child, and was pregnant with the third. Lacy alleges that her step-father frequented her room without permission, often 'snooping through my things,' including her 'mail and intimate clothing.' She complained to her mother repeatedly but 'when I saw nothing was going to be done I just gave up on everything. My step-father could tell my mother anything and she would believe him' Her mother was 'constantly' pregnant and 'things were not good in our house.'

Lacy's mother, unable to work, could no longer give Lacy material things as frequently as she had in the past. In addition, her mother was often tired and too busy to give Lacy much attention. Lacy tried to secure employment so that she could 'get out and be on her own.' She also started skipping school. 'I started going steady. But, my mother and step-father did not like my boyfriend.' Shortly after Thanksgiving Lacy and her boyfriend had a fight. Lacy was in the tenth grade. Following the fight, Lacy was very depressed. Her mother told her it was a good thing that she and her boyfriend argued and subsequently 'broke-up.' Lacy's mother further stated that she 'did not like the young man, had never liked him' and felt that 'Lacy would be better off without him.' Lacy became very angry with her mother. A heated argument took place. Her step-father told her to leave. Her mother acquiesced. Lacy was 15 years old. Lacy left home and subsequently 'dropped out' of school. Lacy states the reason she started skipping classes: she was depressed and without hope.

For all practical and legal purposes Lacy was out of school for eight months. Occasionally, she would visit school--never more than one period per class per week. 'No school official or teacher said anything to me about not being in school.' During this time she lived with the following people in sequence: her girlfriend; her uncle (together with her boyfriend); and with her boyfriend at his parents' home. Neither Lacy nor her boyfriend contributed financially to any of the households. Lacy frequently responded to the help wanted advertisements, with no success. She visited both the Syracuse Youth Referral (SYR) and the New York State Employment (NYSE) offices. Both agencies urged her to return to school. She continued to look for work for a couple of months. One day she just decided that she

wasn't getting anywhere and what she wanted most was to graduate from school--'No matter how long it would take.' Lacy returned to her mother's home and began to attend school daily. She completed all her requirements to graduate from high school with her class. However, in order to accomplish this, Lacy had to attend night school in addition to her regular day classes.

Lacy believes that she was her own motivating force. 'I wanted to be somebody.' In addition to the NYSE and SYR, who always gave her encouragement, she gives credit to her mother for urging and supporting her to graduate from high school. 'My mother kept after me and finally we got together and worked the problem out. She encouraged me to let nothing stop me in getting a good education. My English teacher also helped me.' Lacy's English teacher provided individual tutoring sessions, without cost, for her.

Lacy perceived the school environment as a place where one was on one's own. 'No one cares if you don't come to class. You learn to do for yourself. This is a real free school. You can do just about anything you want to do. About cutting class--they have rules but they're never enforced. I learned this. They say that if you cut once or twice that they are going to do this or that but, I know myself, I have skipped weeks and weeks, no one does anything. They need to come down harder. They need to show kids they care.'

Lacy also perceived that the school isn't teaching students to face the real world. 'Teachers don't talk about the outside world. They talk about English and social studies. They say you're going to have to get a job, but they never get down to the nitty gritty--like what preparation you need or how English and social studies relate to getting a job.'

Lacy did not perceive the school as having any racial problems. She did perceive the 'free use of drugs' as a problem for many of her friends. She stayed away from drugs as she didn't want to 'mess up (her) head.' Her future plans include working a year and the following year attending college. She is confident her mother will support her in this endeavor. Lacy feels very strongly that her mother's influence was the single most important factor that assisted her in her pursuit of a high school diploma. 'I was a lot luckier than most. I knew that if no one else cared my mother did.' Lacy is going with the same boyfriend. They do not plan to marry. Lacy would be identified as a persister.

Case II — A Nonpersister's School Journey

Joyce is a young woman 17 years of age. Eleven years ago she came to New York from Birmingham, Alabama. She attended the public school system and dropped out at the beginning of tenth grade. She lives at home with her mother, four siblings, plus three younger children. Two of the younger children belong to Joyce and the third belongs to Joyce's sister. Her mother, older brother, and one sister are employed.

Joyce's oldest child is two years old and was born when Joyce was 15 years old. She subsequently had a second child who is two months old.

Joyce volunteered the following reason for dropping out of school. Her baby wasn't receiving proper care. His diapers were never changed; he always had a rash. 'I tried to get my babies in a day care center, but they all wanted more money than I could afford. I asked a number of my friends who had dropped out of school to care for my babies, but they said they were going back to school themselves.' She secondly sought help with her math. 'I asked the math teacher to help me. She gave me papers (extra math work) to bring home, but I couldn't do them. If I couldn't do them in class, how could I do them on my own? I needed someone to teach me.' Joyce sighed, 'I don't know of any other help or place I could have asked for help; I tried, but I guess not hard enough.'

Two teachers, her mother, and her friends attempted to persuade Joyce to stay in school. However, not one person was able to resolve Joyce's problems, which would have allowed and encouraged her to remain in school. Her mother tried to get the baby admitted to the Day Care Center in which she was employed, but was unsuccessful. A counselor talked to Joyce. He stressed the need to secure a high school diploma in order for Joyce to get a job. She really didn't believe the counselor, but she does now. 'It's hard for me to find any kind of job.' Joyce had felt that she might resolve her problems if she dropped out of school and found a job. She really didn't understand the need to have a high school diploma in order to be 'seriously' considered for employment.

Joyce perceives her mother as being most supportive. 'She gives me $20 every week to help with the kids--or buys things for them.' One sister helps with the care of the children.

Joyce is a young woman of 17 years of age. She has many of the responsibilities of a much older woman. Although she is very shy and has feelings of despair, isolation, and loneliness, Joyce has not given up, just dropped out. She still dreams of going on to college and becoming a child psychologist.

Joyce perceived her high school as not being a good place to study. 'It was too noisy, kids pushing you in the halls, smoking, anything, in the bathrooms — I minded my own business. I didn't have any friends.'

Joyce has two wishes. First 'I wish that I had been able to stay in school and made it. My second wish is, if I could, I wouldn't have had no kids.'

Joyce is unemployed, 17, and the mother of two babies. She is reading on a sixth grade level.

Joyce would be identified as a dropout.

APPENDIX B - PERSISTERS WITH CHILDREN

Case I

Gloria has a three year old child. The child has cerebral palsy and cannot walk. Gloria attends school because she 'likes school' and wants to 'show people I can finish, even though I had a baby'. Gloria is frequently absent from school because she has to take her baby to therapy. Gloria works two nights a week and attends night school two nights a week. She attends night school in order to make up credits, so that she can eventually graduate. Her mother and aunt help care for the child. Gloria is reading on a 6.7 grade level. She is a persister.

Case II

Mary has a nine month old son. Currently, she has little responsibility for the constant care of her child. The father of the child sporadically contributes to the child's support. Mary's sister has the primary care of the child, leaving Mary free to pursue her education. Both sets of grandparents are willing to babysit or provide for a babysitter. Mary has firm plans to continue her education beyond the high school diploma. She earned six hours of university credit while a student in high school. Her mother is determined that Mary will get the education she missed. Mary's reading level was on a 9.2 level. Mary is a persister.

Case III

Each day Sally would rise at six-thirty, feed and dress herself and her baby. She would then catch the first of the five buses that she would ride in the course of the day to take her baby to the babysitter. After delivering her baby safely at the babysitter's, she would catch the second bus to school. (At noon her sister would pick up the baby from the babysitter and take the baby to the nursery at Washington Irving School. Her sister would also pick up the baby following the close of the nursery school and take the child home with her). After school, Sally would ride the third bus to her place of employment at the MONY Building. She would work until seven o'clock and then take the bus to her sister's house, pick up her baby and catch the fifth and last bus for the day to her home. She arrived home between eight and eight thirty. It was not unusual for Sally to spend three or more hours per day riding the bus. She is on welfare and lives alone with her young child. Sally is a persister.